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ADDRESS
TO THE
LEGISLATURE OF MANITOBA
JANUARY 30th, 1920
BY
HON. DR. R. S. THORNTON
MINISTER OF EDUCATION

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MR. SPEAKER.

In placing the Report of the Department on the Table I wish to take the opportunity to lay before the House a summary of educational developments throughout the year.

The past year has been one of marked activity as will be indicated in the following statistics. The number of pupils enrolled in the public schools of the Province is now 114,662, an increase over last year of 4,737. The average attendance in percentage of enrolment shows an increase of 3.17 per cent. Eighty-three new school districts have been organized. One hundred and thirty-nine new school buildings have been erected. The increasing number of new school districts has made necessary the addition of two new inspectorial divisions, Returned Inspectors having been appointed in each case. Two municipalities have carried the necessary by-law to establish Municipal School Boards. There have been fifteen consolidations which, with one exception, is the largest number taking place in any one year, the total number of consolidations now being ninety-nine. The latest addition to the number of consolidated school buildings is at Oakner, on the Grand Trunk Pacific line, northwest of Hamiota, and deserves some special reference as indicating the type of modern school building now being erected. It consists of four rooms, all on one floor, with a full-size basement. The building is of brick, is fully equipped with hot water heating, electric light, and water supply with necessary sanitary conveniences. The interior is tastefully decorated and the large basement provides space for manual training, domestic science, and a large room available as a gymnasium and as an assembly room for community purposes. There are sliding doors so that this hall may be divided into two if desired. The cost was

\$24,000. The advantages in permanency of teaching staff and of equipment for school work under such conditions, are very obvious. One who was present at the opening of the school reported that it is not a case of getting a majority in the neighborhood to go into consolidation, but a case of the whole neighborhood deciding to serve itself, and serve itself well.

Debentures.

The development of the school system is further indicated by the amount of debentures which have been issued during the year. Debentures amounting to \$504,000 have been issued for building operations in town and rural districts, both number and amount being larger than in any previous year in the history of the Province. More than one half of these debentures have been taken up by the Provincial Government to ensure that no school district shall have to pay more than seven per cent. on its debentures on account of the smallness of the issue or other cause.

Teachers' Bureau

There have been some other developments worthy of mention. For several years a Teachers' Bureau has been conducted in connection with the Department. During the year we have abolished all fees in this branch so that the bureau may be actively and continuously at the service of both teachers and trustees. Under these conditions we will be able to render better service than heretofore.

It was customary to deduct from the school grants the premiums on the bonds of the secretary-treasurer (one dollar twenty-five cents) and also the payments to the Trustees Association (two dollars). Now both these items are paid by the Department, the amount of school grants being paid in full without these deductions. These items represent an indirect contribution by the Province to the school grants of over \$10,000.

Returned Soldiers.

Two special terms of the Normal school have been arranged for returned soldiers who wished to take up teaching, one in April last and one in January of this year, while several have attended the ordinary Normal sessions. The Advisory

Board decided on their being admitted on Grade Ten standing, the general requirement being Grade Eleven. Assistance has been given by a loan at the rate of fifty dollars per month during the school period, the loan being repaid without interest. Some of the teachers have married and taken schools with a teacher's residence, where they can have a home while carrying on their work.

Special classes were held in the University during the summer to enable the boys to prepare for matriculation, and generally to resume their studies. The financial assistance granted by the Province in these two respects has amounted to \$20,000.

The Soldiers Taxation Relief Act, where it applies to schools in unorganized territory, has been administered in this Department, the amount of taxes remitted or refunded being \$18,000. This direct contribution by the Province has not only assisted the soldiers, but has relieved the school districts in question from a large burden of uncollected taxes and put them in a satisfactory position.

But the most gratifying evidence of progress is not to be found in statistical records, but in the increasing interest on the part of the community as a whole in all educational activities, and the increasing co-operation and harmony between all sections in the cause of education. This manifests itself in various ways, one illustration being the wonderful development of the Boys' and Girls' Club work.

Boys' and Girls' Clubs.

These Clubs are carried on under the Extension Branch in conjunction with the Department of Education, the inspectors and teachers taking active part in the work. The Clubs have a membership of over 30,000 boys and girls, being more than one-third of all the school children in the Province outside of the cities of Brandon and Winnipeg. The practical education in agriculture and handicraft thus afforded is of much value. The annual school fair has become an established feature in the life of nearly every community, rivalling in many places the regular agricultural fair. The general success of the movement owes much to the active assistance rendered by farmers and business men in managing the clubs.

Consolidation.

Between the executive and members of the Trustees' Association for Manitoba and the Department there has been very close co-operation. In the Municipality of Lansdown the council was faced with a difficult problem of adjusting boundaries of school districts. They invited the Department to appoint a commission to make a survey and advise the council. The selection of the commission was made in consultation with the council and the expenses shared between the council and the Department. Sitzings of the commission were held at every school in the municipality, and a report was made, advising certain consolidations. The report was printed and distributed to the ratepayers so that they might become thoroughly acquainted with the recommendations. As a result three consolidations went through harmoniously without any of the friction which, unfortunately, sometimes arises.

Langford Municipality took the same course of action, and two consolidations resulted there. Two other municipalities, at their own request, are now having a survey made of their territory with the same purpose in view.

Municipal School Boards.

In July, the ratepayers of Miniota Municipality, by a substantial majority, carried a by-law to establish a Rural Municipal School Board, which was duly organized, the new trustees taking charge on August 1st. They have appointed a Superintendent of Schools to discharge duties similar to those undertaken by the Superintendent in Winnipeg, acting as general administrator and inspector for schools and teachers. In November a similar by-law was carried in the newly organized Municipality of Woodlea, in the territory between the lakes, by a majority of 223 to 27, but the new Board has not yet got into operation.

The Municipal Board in Miniota is the first to have been established under the legislation passed in 1916, but the question is being carefully discussed and considered at meetings of Trustees' Associations throughout the Province. The policy of the Department in these movements of Consolidation and Municipal School Boards, while actively sympathetic, has been to leave the initiative and carrying out of the proposals in the hands of the districts concerned. Any such movement to be a

success must be based on public opinion in the community affected, and harmonious action is essential to the satisfactory establishing and maintenance of these new methods of administration. We supply speakers, on invitation, to give information on these matters, the Superintendent of Education and the members of the Trustees' Association rendering good service in this connection.

Another agency whose co-operation we welcome is that of the

Public Health Nurses.

The body of Public Health Nurses for the visitation of schools and homes throughout the Province was organized in 1916 under the Provincial Board of Health, and began operations with five nurses. There are now thirty-one engaged, and applications are steadily coming in from various municipalities throughout the Province. The Public Health nurse is being gladly received everywhere, and general testimony is forthcoming as to the benefits of her presence in the district. It is difficult as yet to show these results in specific statistics, but one striking fact bears testimony to the beneficial effects of the administration of the re-organized Board of Health: the reduction in infant mortality to one-third of its former rate.

Up till now we have not been able to get the benefits of the Health Nurses in the New Canadian settlements, but very shortly two will be placed, one in the territory east of Winnipeg, and one in the territory between the Lakes. They will be able to carry on their work by making their residence, during their visits, in the teacherages of the public school, which will thus help to solve another phase of the problem of caring for the child life of the Province.

Before dealing with certain phases of our school problem I wish to direct attention to the

Grants for Education.

made during the period of this administration.

The total amount paid in educational grants during 1919 was \$920,000. The total amount of grants during the past four

years shows an increase over the previous four years of \$1,200,000 or an extra amount of \$300,000 each year which this administration has had to provide. Let it be emphasized that these moneys are not expenditures of the Department, but are grants made to various educational boards throughout the Province. They bear ample evidence of the expansion of our school system and of the estimate placed on education by this Government, and show that, notwithstanding the difficult period through which we have passed and are passing, we have duly cared for the education and training of the boys and girls of this Province that they might be useful, intelligent, and capable Canadian citizens.

The increase in the grants paid to the trustees of the various school districts is due to the increased number of schools, the increased grant to each school, the increase in the number of schools operating through the whole year, and the increasing number of consolidations. During this current year these amounts will be still larger, as we will now carry the full burden of the extra grants to secondary schools announced last year. Beginning on January 1st, 1919, an increased grant was made to all intermediate schools, High Schools and Collegiates, equivalent to \$200 for each teacher employed. This was done to enable the districts to meet the necessary increases in teachers' salaries in these departments, and involves an added charge on the Provincial Treasury of \$35,000 per annum.

New Canadian Schools.

The work under the Special School Organizer (Mr. Stratton), in the New Canadian settlements has progressed satisfactorily in spite of unusual difficulties created by the influenza epidemic, disturbed industrial conditions, and bad roads.

During the year there have been built twenty-four schools and twenty-six teacherages. It is now just four years since this work was begun, and in that period there have been built one hundred and fifty-eight school-rooms of which one hundred and forty-four are entirely additional, and ninety-three teacherages. Arrangements are being made now for an active building campaign this spring and summer to reach out in the newer territory. The members are now fairly familiar with the conditions under which this work has to be carried on—the distance of

many of these schools from a railroad station; the poor roads necessary to travel in order to reach them; the necessary negotiations and discussions with the ratepayers in the district in order to secure harmonious co-operation—and are able to realize how much progress is represented by the statistics just given. They represent an average of more than one building per week during the entire period, winters included. It is well to remember, too, that the money spent in the erection of these buildings is raised through the ordinary channels of taxation in the districts affected, and that no special grants have been given which are not available to all school districts in similar circumstances.

Co-operation

We have had occasion to refer to the sympathetic co-operation of various agencies; such as, The Daughters of Empire, The Women's Institutes, the Women's Section of United Farmers, and similar organizations.

The Daughters of Empire have placed one hundred and fifty-six libraries in as many schools. The results are further reaching than at first sight might be apparent. One little girl writes: "English ladies who have not seen us send us these books for love." Children in these schools are carrying on correspondence with children in other schools in Canada, thus helping to break barriers of origin, place and Province.

The Secretary of the Women's Section of the United Farmers reports that "Eighteen New Canadian schools are receiving assistance from Women's Sections, the object being to help the teachers in the foreign districts in their work, and make a united people in Canada." The co-operation takes a very practical form in the way of contributions for Hot Lunch outfits for use in the school, and balls and bats for use in the playgrounds. There is a reflex effect from all of this, resulting in a more active interest in the home school and in education generally.

Talking Machines.

Twenty-four talking machines are now installed in as many schools, in every case as a result of purely local efforts. The teachers and pupils organize concerts and socials to raise money for gramophones, pictures, and other purposes, and the

sums thus raised are frequently supplemented by a donation from some of the societies mentioned above. It is difficult to realize the value of the gramophone in any school, but especially in New Canadian districts. It provides much-needed recreation for pupil and teacher alike, assists in physical exercises, and constantly provides lessons in English.

We have succeeded in securing sewing machines (forty-two now in use) from the dealers at wholesale prices for use in the public schools. The local agents and dealers were ready to give a special quotation on gramophones for use in schools, but so far the manufacturers have not agreed to this concession. We hope, however, that very soon they will deem it a privilege to assist in this work of education.

Teachers.

The devotion of the teachers to their work continues in full measure. During the 'Flu epidemic seventy-five of them closed their schools and, like their sisters throughout the Province, turned in as volunteer nurses, doing all that in them lay to assist the sufferers and stay the progress of the disease.

In one district north, between the Lakes, the teacher has carried on valuable experiments with wheat. The country is marshy and damp, hence subject to early frosts, and it is desirable to secure an early variety of wheat suitable to the conditions. The teacher procured from Ottawa a small supply of seed of Ruby wheat. The children planted it, and at the end of the season turned in a detailed account of their observations and results, together with samples of the wheat raised which have been sent to the Department for grading.

Progress.

In the reports for the year many gratifying evidences of progress appear. One inspector reports that: "The foreign schools in this district are, to all intents and purposes, a thing of the past, and those that were classed as such at one time are now included among our progressive Canadian schools."

Another inspector whose territory includes the areas where we first began our building operations, goes into interest-

ing details. He gives several instances of the benefits resulting from increased accommodation, of which we may select the district served by the Greater Winnipeg Waterway as a type. "In 1917 there were three schools in operation with one hundred and eighty-six pupils. Now we have seven schools with two hundred and seventy-one pupils. An eighth district has been organized and a school-house will be erected this year. Two hundred and seventy-one pupils are today attending comfortable school-rooms where, three years ago, only one hundred and eighty-six were receiving very meagre instructions in badly over-crowded classrooms. But this is not all of the change that has been effected. In 1917 the three schools mentioned above were in charge of unqualified teachers who had received what little training they possessed under the old bi-lingual system. In 1919 seven qualified English-speaking teachers were in charge. Except in a few of the outlying districts the inferior unqualified teachers have practically been eliminated."

In spite of the heavy handicap under which all schools were laboring during the past year owing to the epidemic of influenza and other causes, the progress was very satisfactory. The candidates who wrote on the Entrance examination in this division numbered twenty-three in 1917; forty-two in 1918; and fifty-three in 1919. Of the fifty-three candidates last year forty-two passed, fourteen of them with honours, two boys of Polish parentage taking fourth and seventh places respectively in the standing of the Province. Of the forty-two successful candidates thirty-two come from homes where no English is spoken. The report continues:

"Since the policy of placing English-speaking teachers in the schools in non-English communities has been followed, a remarkable change has taken place. Three years ago it was practically impossible to do business in any of these communities without employing the services of an interpreter. Today meetings can be held and the business conducted in all of them in English. Very seldom are the services of an interpreter required. Not only have the children learned the English language, but many of the older people have taken advantage of the night-schools conducted by the teachers and have acquired a working knowledge of English. At the social gatherings I attended during the winter months, the younger people spoke English almost exclusively."

The social activities referred to, and the teacher's cottage are very important factors in the work. The school has become the community centre and the influence extends far beyond the regular school programme. The Department has issued a pamphlet on the Education of the New Canadian, giving an intimate glimpse into the life and work of the teacher in these sections. Copies of this pamphlet may be obtained on application.

Comments of Observers. England.

From time to time visitors from other Provinces and from across the sea come to enquire into conditions here. One lady journalist, who was sent to Canada by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company to prepare a pamphlet on education in Canada, after visiting some twelve class-rooms in the rural districts writes as follows:

"As I listened to some fifty boys and girls, first singing a familiar hymn, and then 'Oh! Canada,' in perfect English and with keen enjoyment and understanding, I thought there must surely be a mistake somewhere.

It was difficult to believe that these clear, beautiful voices, enunciating each English word so distinctly and without the slightest trace of foreign accent, belonged to children whose parents had come from remote parts of Europe; parents who, themselves, in most cases, knew not a word of English except perhaps what they had picked up from their own offspring.

The children clearly loved their school. They were happy, good-tempered, and on the best of terms with their teachers. There was a 'home' feeling about several of the schools, and a 'motherliness' about the teachers which appealed to me greatly.

Cookery, needlework lessons, gardening and wood-work, have been found most helpful in the Canadianizing process. The hot lunch, cooked on the school stove, with the tinned and bottled fruits and vegetables grown by the children in the school garden not only provides food for the body, but an object lesson in Canadian ways of cooking and serving meats. It is, indeed quite wonderful how these teachers seize every opportunity of helping the children unconsciously to become Canadian citizens. And in this connection I should like to say that the 'teacherage' plays a great part in the education of the non-English child, and possibly also of his parents."

From the United States.

The following extract from the editorial columns of the "Daily News", Des Moines, Iowa, is also of considerable interest:

"Manitoba is setting in its public schools a fine example for the United States....."

The changing over of the foreign language schools of Manitoba is being done smoothly and through a new policy.....

Within a few years, children, who otherwise would have grown up as strangers, will be able to go anywhere in Manitoba or all Canada and feel at home.....

Mennonites.

During the past year the school situation in the Mennonite colony has required much attention. A year ago we laid before the House a somewhat detailed statement of the considerations involved in this problem, and a brief reference will suffice on this occasion.

The Mennonites came to Canada in 1873 and 1874, settling in two reserves south of Winnipeg, east and west of the Red River. Their representatives had made an agreement with the then Dominion Government which granted them certain privileges and exemptions. In the order-in-council dealing with this agreement was a clause concerning education which reads:

"That the Mennonites will have the fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles and educating their children in schools, as provided by law, without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever."

Nowhere in any of the correspondence is there any mention or suggestion of any language privilege but this clause has been interpreted by a section of the colonists to mean that they could run their own schools in any way they pleased, and so they established private schools, carrying on a meagre education, and almost solely in the German tongue. All preceding Provincial administrations, while not necessarily acquiescing, with this opinion, have refrained from dealing with this situation, with the result that for forty-five years there are some areas in

the districts referred to where no public school has been erected till 1919. Among the Mennonites themselves there is a clear difference of opinion, a large majority of them having accepted the public schools. In the towns, representing twenty classrooms, excellent public schools are maintained, and the changed conditions occasioned by the legislation of 1916 have been completely accepted. In the purely rural sections, numbering twenty-eight public school districts, many difficulties have arisen. In nearly every district there are a few favorably disposed to the public school, but they are restrained by the reactionary element.

The situation became acute in 1918. Early in that year a campaign was inaugurated to destroy our public school system in the rural districts. Meetings were held, urging the ratepayers to give up the Government grants and run the schools as private schools. To meet this movement a special agent, Mr. Frank Greenway, was appointed. Trustees and ratepayers were notified personally and in writing to leave the public schools alone, but the campaign persisted. In every case when the public school was abandoned the district was placed under Mr. Greenway as Official Trustee, and the school continued to operate as a public school. Ten districts were thus taken over before the agitation was stopped.

Our next step was to revive a number of public schools which had been managed as private schools for varying periods of time. There were fourteen of such districts with sixteen classrooms, all of which have been revived and are operating as public schools, sixteen private schools having been eliminated in the process. We now have a public school operating in every public school area and, for the most part, satisfactorily. In three districts we have handed back the administration to the local board of trustees, the people having signed a petition in which they agree to manage them as public schools under the regulations of the Department.

In one or two districts this element carried their antagonism to the point of erecting new private schools. This condition has been dealt with under the School Attendance Act. There have been several prosecutions, all resulting in conviction. One of these cases led to a test case in the Courts as to the validity of the School Attendance Act and as to the scope of the agreement of 1873.

Court of Appeal.

Houston School District had been organized in 1899 and a public school erected. This was operated as a public school till 1906, when the Government grants were cut off because of the refusal to fly the flag. In 1918 the school was placed under the official trustee and a public school teacher installed. No children attended school and the parents were brought before a magistrate and fined. A test case was submitted to the Manitoba Court of Appeal and the full Court decided unanimously in favor of the magistrate's decision. The case has been still further appealed to the Supreme Court at Ottawa and will be heard at the next sitting of that body. In the reasons for judgment occurs the following comment:

"The last quoted paragraph, so far as the subject matter of education is concerned, clearly provides for the education of Mennonite children in schools 'as provided by law,..... What it means is, that the Mennonites are to have the unhampered and unrestricted privilege of educating their children in the schools provided by the laws of the country in which they proposed to settle."

The questions submitted to the Court and the answers thereto were these:

(1). Q. Had the Government of the Province of Manitoba the power to pass "The School Attendance Act," being Chapter 97 of the Statutes of Manitoba, 1916.

A. Yes.

(2). Q. If the Government of the Province of Manitoba had power to pass the said Act is it binding upon the accused, John Hildebrand, a Mennonite who came to this country in or about 1874 with his parents, who were members of the community referred to in the exhibits filed in the case.

A. It is.

(3). Q. Had the Government of the Province of Manitoba power to legislate as to the schools, school attendance or education, in so far as the accused or any Mennonite coming from that part of Russia referred to in the evidence was concerned.

A. It had and has.

New Public Schools.

There remains now to be dealt with the private school areas where no public school districts had ever been created. The Act was amended at the last session giving the Department authority to create these districts without petition of the residents. A survey was made, various districts were mapped out, and the erection of buildings begun. A policy of passive resistance was pursued by the reactionary element. They declined to sell land for a school site making it necessary for us to expropriate. The local lumber merchant who had agreed to supply building materials cancelled his agreement under a threatened boycott by the community. Contractor and materials had to be got from Winnipeg, involving increased cost to the school district, but notwithstanding these and other vexatious obstacles our Official Trustee carried on steadily, exercising no undue haste, trying to secure the co-operation of the people, and in due course had four schools completed, two of them opening in October and two in December. The patience and tact of the Trustee, together with the assistance of the teachers whom he has placed in these schools, have borne good fruit. The people have now accepted the situation, the private schools in these districts have been closed, and the children are regularly attending the public school. Where, for forty-five years, there have been only private schools teaching little or no English, we have now four public schools giving education solely in English. The following letter just received from the teacher of one of these new public schools gives a glimpse of the conditions: "I am glad to report that the School is now running very smoothly. Every child of school age is attending with exception of two. These two are living at the very southwest corner of the district, the road to which is not used in the winter. The parents, however, are very keen to send them in the spring. The children are very happy and the parents could not keep them away from our school if they tried to." During the next summer the building programme will be resumed, and the present attitude of the people indicates that there will be co-operation between them and the Department.

Hutterites.

During the fall of 1918 a colony of Hutterites came to Manitoba from South Dakota, and settled in six communities at Elie and Benard, about thirty-five miles west of Winnipeg.

The Manitoba Government was not consulted or advised in the matter, and the people were already partly settled here before we were aware of their coming. The sect is of German origin and had been settled in South Dakota for fifty years retaining, during that period, their German speech, having been allowed by the State their own schools, and teachers. On coming to Canada they had received, from the Dominion Government, exemption from military service, and apparently expected special privileges from the Government of the Province. In particular, they desired to continue the education of their children in German, but the Department intimated to them that the education of the children must be in English and that they must conform in all respects to the Provincial laws. When this was made clear they were disposed to co-operate with the Department but, unfortunately, at various stages they were advised to resist. It was therefore necessary to deal very firmly with the situation. The question of adjusting school districts presented some awkward complications. The community houses affected six public school districts, and the sudden advent of twenty-five or more children of school age into a school district created many problems of accommodation. A solution was finally worked out to the satisfaction of most of the parties concerned. Four new public school districts were created and placed under the charge of the school inspector for the district as Official Trustee. Three new school buildings have been erected and the fourth will be built this year, temporary accommodation being meanwhile provided of a fairly adequate character. The other two districts, under the existing boards of trustees, have provided the necessary accommodation there. Two teacher's residences have been built. The net result is that the children of the Hutterite colonists are all attending public schools, and are being taught by Canadian teachers entirely in the English language. The schools were opened early in September, the children attending regularly, and under the tact and persistence of the teachers, good progress is being shown.

The children are learning to converse in English. They sing our National songs, and are beginning to speak of themselves as Canadians.

Canadian Schools.

In this survey I have endeavored to sketch the developments of our public school system during the past few years.

It is a record of progress all along the line, and the spirit of united effort which has been fostered and developed augurs well for continued progress in the future. In considering the particular problems referred to it is well to remember that we are dealing with the results of barely four years of effort, carried on under difficult conditions at a time when the exigencies of war conditions were taking our teachers into business callings and when we were raising our standard of teacher training from Grade Ten to Grade Eleven. It was a task of no small magnitude to endeavor to turn into one channel the currents of thought which for many long years had been running in so many diverse channels with so many diverse aims and aspirations. We set our faces in the right direction. We have travelled steadily and considerably toward our goal. We have witnessed progress and development beyond our expectations, but much remains yet to be done. It is absolutely necessary to carry on on the same lines if the efforts of these years are to be maintained and followed with full success.

The problem calls for united effort. The people concerned are responding to our efforts. Our final desire is the welfare of Canada, and a square deal and fair opportunity to every child in the Province. It is necessary that this policy shall, in the national interest, be sympathetically yet firmly persisted in to the end that there shall be established and permanently maintained in every part of this Province, Canadian schools with Canadian teachers teaching the English language, fostering the ideals of Canadian citizenship based on the spirit and traditions of the British Empire.